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Secwepemc artwork signifies culturally safe welcome at IH health sites

The glass etchings are elegant, and their message – *TsuMinte re Secwepemcul'ecw* – is as clear as the surface on which it is marked: You are on the traditional territory of the Secwepemc Nation, and you are welcome here.

The unveiling of new Secwepemc artwork by artist Tony Antoine at Royal Inland Hospital today will help reduce barriers and create spaces that ensure Aboriginal people feel safe and acknowledged when accessing Interior Health's services. It is the result of a continued collaboration between Interior Health (IH) and regional First Nations leaders to provide quality care that is culturally sensitive and welcoming.

"This partnership between Interior Health and the Secwepemc Nation is great news and will provide lovely additions to Interior Health's hospitals and health centres," said Health Minister Adrian Dix. "The etchings help foster a sense of cultural awareness and identity."

"The Secwepemctsin language and the traditional images incorporated into these art pieces are powerful reminders of our culture and our connection to this land as the foundation of our health and wellness as Secwepemc people. These pieces affirm our presence as a healthy, vibrant, and welcoming people to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous patients accessing services at these health care facilities," said Kukpi7 Ryan Day, Chair, Secwepemc Health Caucus.

In 2015, IH Aboriginal Health provided funding to each of the seven First Nations within Interior Health for the creation of artwork that would be displayed in hospitals and health centres located in each of the Nations' traditional territories.

Some art pieces have been completed and installed: in Kelowna, Okanagan Nation Alliance paintings have been hung in Kelowna, Vernon and Penticton hospitals; in Williams Lake, a carved wooden bench from the Tsilhqot'in First Nation is located at Deni House residential care; and in Kamloops, a glass etching is hung at the Home Health community clinic. The latter was also created by Antoine.

"It's important to provide a health care environment that is culturally safe, and above all welcoming, to all Interior Health residents, especially our Aboriginal communities on whose traditional territories our facilities stand," said Doug Cochrane, Interior Health Board Chair. "This is a special day for us and, on behalf of Interior Health, I want to thank Secwepemc artist Tony Antoine for these works of art, which will serve as a reminder to IH of our commitment to cultural safety and our recognition of traditional territories."

Today at Royal Inland Hospital (RIH), six glass etchings by Antoine were unveiled. Two will hang near entrances at RIH, while the other four will find homes at Barriere Health Centre, Chase Health Centre, Shuswap Lake General Hospital in Salmon Arm, and Dr. Helmcken Memorial Hospital in Clearwater.

A similar ceremony will be held later this week at Cariboo Memorial Hospital (CMH) in Williams Lake. Two glass etchings by Antoine will be unveiled that are destined for CMH and 100 Mile District General Hospital.

"We are very fortunate to have these beautiful glass etchings by Tony Antoine, signifying that we are on Secwepemc territory," said Brad Anderson, Interior Health's Corporate Director of Aboriginal Health.

“One of our goals is to promote and maintain sustainable, respectful, and responsive partnerships between Aboriginal people and Interior Health, so that we may create patient-centred programs and services that meet their needs. It’s a pleasure to work toward such a meaningful goal alongside our Secwepemc First Nation partners.”

Tony Antoine is a community member from Splatstin, within the Secwepemc Territory. He has practised various art forms since childhood, including wood-carving, wood-burning, painting, and glass-etching.

“I would like to thank the Secwepemc Health Caucus and Interior Health for the opportunity to be involved in this project and for selecting my artwork to represent the Secwepemc Nation. I’m excited and look forward to more opportunities to contribute to projects like this in the future,” said Antoine.

Interior Health is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and providing a wide range of quality health-care services to more than 740,000 people living across B.C.’s vast interior. For more information, visit www.interiorhealth.ca, follow us on Twitter [@Interior_Health](https://twitter.com/Interior_Health), or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/InteriorHealth.

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